

The Roman Aristocratic Matron

Women in Antiquity | Meeting #11

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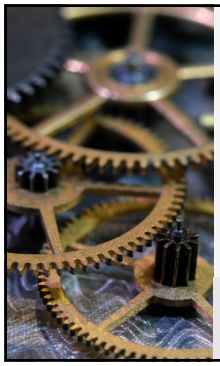

Upcoming Dates

- Monday, December 7
  - Position Paper due
- Tuesday, December 15
  - Final Exam
- Sunday, November 22
  - Responses for Week 11 Due

2

Five things today

- Roman culture
- Roman names
- Rome under the kings
- The Roman Republic
- The Principate

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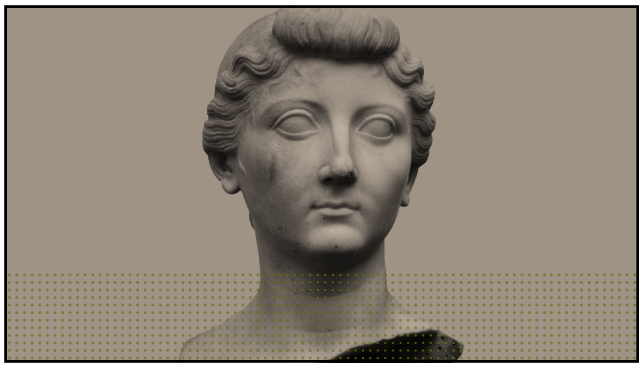

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Quiz #1: Ancient Goddesses and Gods

1. Most Roman upper-class women married at least once, but the birth rate among nobles remained low. Reasons for this low birth rate include all of the following EXCEPT:
   a. Arranged marriage was standard for the nobility, leading to unaffectionate couples and both parties turning to lovers and adultery
   b. Roman women are thought to have been less fertile than other nations, producing fewer eggs
   c. Mothers died during childbirth often enough that females had a shorter lifespan overall
   d. Roman married couples (and adulterers) practiced contraception and, if necessary, abortion to prevent unwanted children

2. According to the story related by Livy in "The Capture of the Sabine Women," after being abducted, the Sabine women
   a. angrily rallied their fathers and brothers to war and called on them to destroy the Romans
   b. appealed to the gods for Rome to be obliterated
   c. watched in horror as the Roman and Sabine men slaughtered each other
   d. prevented battle between their old families and the Romans, saying their duty was now to Rome

3. In "The Rape of Lucretia," Lucretia is killed by
   a. the king's son, Sextus Tarquinius
   b. the enraged senator, Brutus
   c. the disgraced husband, Conlatinus
   d. Lucretia herself

4. Marriage with manus
   a. transferred guardianship from the wife's paterfamilias to the husband's
   b. was the traditional, conservative form and was increasingly uncommon in the Roman Republic
   c. could be prevented by sleeping three consecutive nights outside the husband's home
   d. all of the above

5. According to Pomeroy, the idealized matron Cornelia was famous for all of the following EXCEPT:
   a. After becoming widowed, she remarried to a Ptolemy, becoming Egyptian royalty
   b. She was admired for being independent, cultured, self-assured, and devoted to her children's education
   c. She took pride in being the daughter of Scipio Africanus, who defeated Hannibal
   d. She bore 12 children, two of whom grew up to be important political figures

Extra Credit

EC. Why did the king's son, Sextus Tarquinius, decide to rape Lucretia? Why her, specifically?

5

Questions about whatever



6

The Romans

7



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Etruscans

- Indigenous city-state culture of north Italy
- Language unrelated to any other
- Wealthy, isolated cities widely separated from each other
- Trade with the Greeks and the Phoenicians

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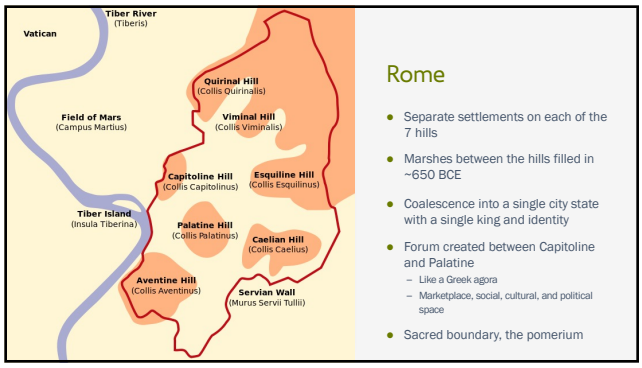

Rome

- Separate settlements on each of the 7 hills
- Marshes between the hills filled in ~650 BCE
- Coalescence into a single city state with a single king and identity
- Forum created between Capitoline and Palatine
  - Like a Greek agora
  - Marketplace, social, cultural, and political space
- Sacred boundary, the pomerium

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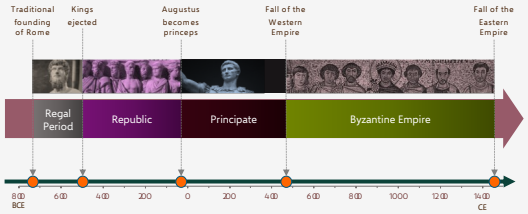
Periods of Roman history



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Roman Names

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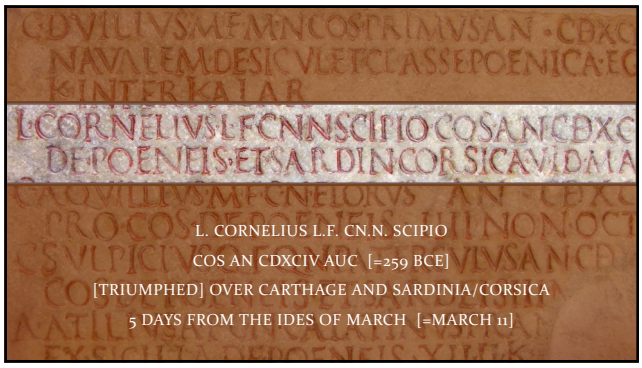
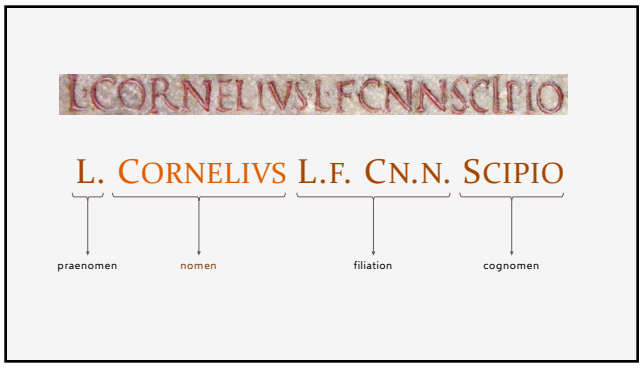

L. CORNELIUS L.F. CN.N. SCIPIO
COS AN CDXCIV AUC [=259 BCE]
[TRIUMPHED] OVER CARTHAGE AND SARDINIA/CORSICA
5 DAYS FROM THE IDES OF MARCH [=MARCH 11]

13


L. CORNELIVS L.F. CN.N. SCIPIO
praenomen
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cognomen

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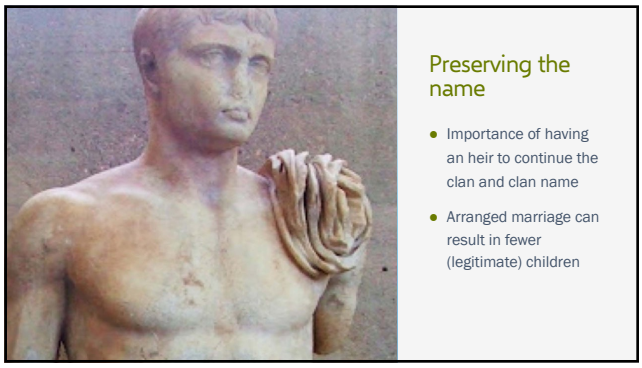
Preserving the name
Importance of having an heir to continue the clan and clan name
Arranged marriage can result in fewer (legitimate) children

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C. OCTAVIVS C.F.

C. IVLIVS C.F. CAESAR OCTAVIANVS

16



17

IVLIA

18

Rome under the Kings

19



The Roman king

- Both executive ruler and high priest
- Elected by the nobility

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(I) Romulus

- Legendary founder
  - Cast out as a baby and left to die by the banks of the Tiber
  - Suckled by a she-wolf
  - Returns to the same place as an adult to found a new city
  - Twin brother Remus
- Stories describe him as strong, effective, and ruthless

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Primary Source Reading

Livy
"The Capture of the Sabine Women"



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(VII) L. Tarquinius Superbus

- Tarquin "the Proud"
- Usurps throne
- Arrogant and expansionist
- Despotic repression of nobles and other Latins
- Sybilline books

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Primary Source Reading

Livy
"The Rape of Lucretia"



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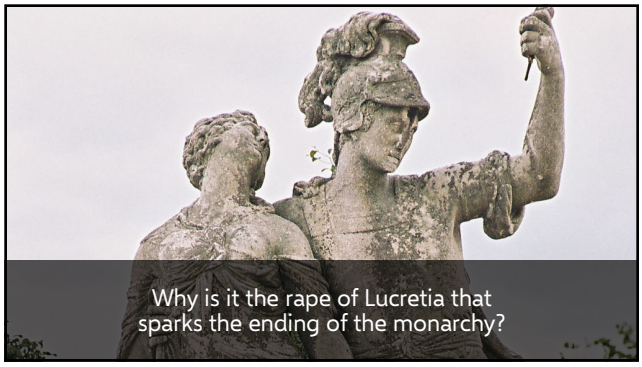

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The Roman Republic

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The Republic

- Shared rule by the 200 or so propertied clans
- Designed to prevent any individual from gaining preeminence over other Romans
- Characterized by:
  - Collegiality
  - Annual office
  - Separate voting of imperium
  - Ladder of offices

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Secondary Source Reading

Mary Boatwright

"Women and Gender in the Forum Romanum"

- Presence of women in the Forum rare
  - Sometimes collective
- Images of notable women start to appear during the Principate



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Guardianship

- Guardianship of minors regarding law and property
- Roman men are represented by their paterfamilias until coming of age
- Guardianship of women continues after coming of age
  - Transfers to husband's paterfamilias after marriage (with manus)

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Marriage

- What matters in Rome is the family
- Aristocratic marriage is about connections between families, even more than in other ancient societies
- Marriage with and without manus

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Children

- Relations with both parents more formal than intimate
- Servants played a large role for wealthier families
  - Wet nurses
  - Nannies
  - Pedagogues
- Birth rate a matter of constant concern
  - Men dying in battle
  - Women dying in childbirth
  - Arranged marriage might cause disinterest and infidelity
  - Contraception and abortion
- Adoption of adult males to preserve family name

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Slaves and freedmen

- Romans had many slaves
  - Domestic
  - Industrial and agricultural
  - Miners
- Romans were generous with manumission
- Two large populations under the free citizens
  - Slaves
  - Freedmen and freedwomen (ex-slaves)

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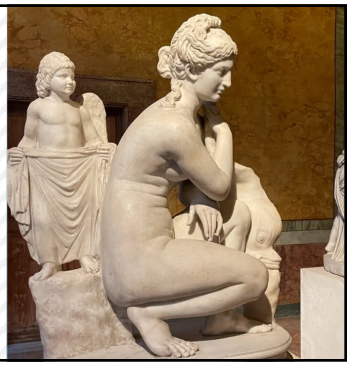
Secondary Source Reading

Teresa Carp

"Two Matrons of the Late Republic"

- Roman matrons had it better than we used to think
  - A range of choices in their roles and lifestyles
  - A demonstrable influence on cultural and political life
- Servilia
  - Mother of Brutus the Assassin and mistress of Caesar
  - Documented political influence
- Cicero wrote of the independence and influence of women close to him
  - Caerellia, intimate friend of Cicero
  - Terentia, his wife
  - Tullia, his daughter



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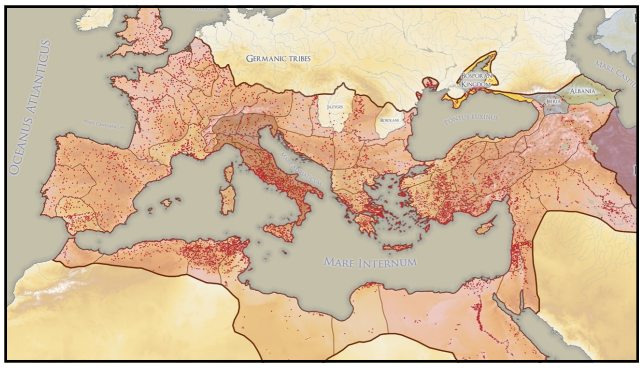

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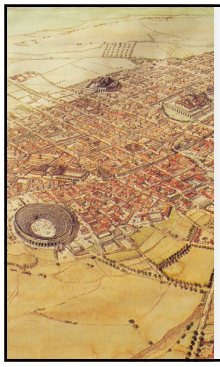

Roman provincial cities

- 50-70 million people throughout the empire
  - 20% in ~2000 cities
  - 1 million in Rome
- Rome encouraged the growth of cities
  - Status of colony or municipium
  - Remission of taxes
  - Funding for construction
- Generators of economic and cultural power
  - Markets, manufacturing, resources
  - Infrastructure (roads, harbors, aqueducts)
  - Social venues (theaters, circuses, gladiators/blood sports)
- Appeal of Roman life and status + distance from Rome

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Secondary Source Reading

Elaine Fantham

"Aemilia Pudentilla: Or the Wealthy Widow's Choice"

- Roman provincial cities were like miniature Romes
  - Architecture
  - Trade
  - Presence of Romans and Italians
  - Roman language and culture
- Aemilia Pudentilla as a case study in Roman north Africa
  - Wealthy, self-possessed and shrewd
- Importance of remarriage for widows



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The Principate

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The Principate

- Republic devolves into a series of civil wars
- Last warlord standing is Octavian, the great-nephew of Caesar
  - He becomes "princeps" = first citizen
  - Family name becomes Caesar Augustus

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Livia

- Augustus shared power with his wife
- Livia took on "private" aspects of the principate
  - Network of matrons, vestals, etc.
  - Intelligence gathering among the nobility
  - Notes written in a secret code no one had access to
  - Moral review of the senate
- Given the name Augusta

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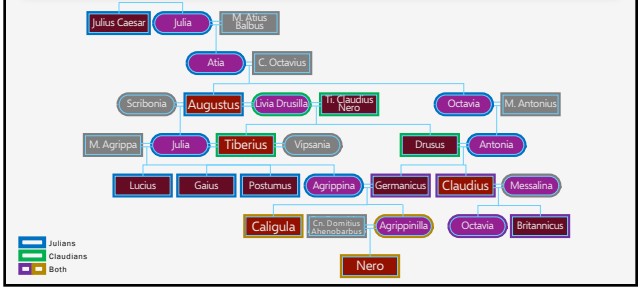
The Julio-Claudians



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Secondary Source Reading

Mireille Corbier

"Male Power and Legitimacy Through Women: The Domus Augusta"

- Shortage of men and an excess of women
- Legitimacy of rule through women
  - Marriages
  - Adoptions
- Danger posed by women
  - Often more popular than the male rules
  - Seen by public as honorable and admirable
  - Much harder to act against
- Domus Augusta was a closed circle entered through via women



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Gender and culture

- Strong women a critical part of the early dynasties
- Patronage of the arts
  - Encouraged under Augustus
  - Ebbs under Tiberius and Caligula
  - Resurges under Claudius, Nero, and the Flavians

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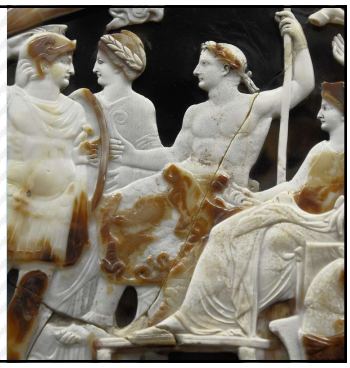
Secondary Source Reading

Susan Fischler

"Social Stereotypes and Historical Analysis: The Case of the Imperial Women at Rome"

- Women prominent and of critical importance in the imperial families
- Importance recognized by the state
  - Portraits on coinage
  - Depicted on crossroad reliefs
  - Titles and honors
- Avatars of religious and political continuity between principes
  - Honored as women and as symbols of the imperial order



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